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# FRIENDS OF CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE

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www.cpopenspace.com

June, 2004

## Come Visit Us at the Town's July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebrations!

### FCPOS Will Have Booth at Clifton Commons Festivities

The Town officially celebrates our nation's independence with their traditional fair and fireworks at the Clifton Commons. Friends of Clifton Park Open Space will have a booth Sunday afternoon, July 4<sup>th</sup>, at the Commons.

Please come and visit us there. We want to share some of our information including:

- See our past Newsletters
- Look at our town mapping of natural resources, farms, parks, etc.
- Review our recommendations on the Western Clifton Park GEIS
- Join our mailing list
- Take an informal survey on your priorities for our town
- Give us your suggestions
- Buy a tee-shirt for FCPOS

Support our grassroots efforts. We would love to see your interest.

### *Together We Can Keep the Park in Clifton Park*

#### STEERING COMMITTEE

Frank Berlin, Friends of Veteran's Park

Margaret Catellier, Citizens Assn. for Reasonable Expansion

Gil Kortz, Clifton Park Zoning Bd, past Chair Clifton Park ECC

Ray Seymour, Saratoga P.L.A.N.

Clark Wilson, Rexford Civic Association

Susan Burton, League of Women Voters of Saratoga County



## Open Space Plan Approved May, 2003—One Year Later

### Plan's Progress

After two years in the planning stages and three public hearings, a new plan for preserving open space received unanimous approval Monday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2003 from the Town Board.

Some of the overall goals of the Plan included:

- Creating a Dwaas Kill Nature Area and stream corridor greenway, protecting 300 to 600 acres in the next 2 to 5 years.
- Adding land to the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve, 50 to 100 acres in the next 2 to 5 years.
- Working with farmers to preserve 300 to 600 acres of the town's most valuable working farmland.
- Obtaining land for one large (150 acres) and one or two small to moderate-sized (10 to 20 acres) town parks
- Promoting design guidelines for historic hamlets
- Hiring an Open Space Plan Coordinator to apply for grants and seek out important properties.

The Open Space Plan committee co-chairmen David Miller and Jim Romano have stayed on the committee with a smaller working group to move these objectives forward.

Some progress has been made—most notably the GEIS and building moratorium for the western part of town. But also with evaluation of different land parcels, park development, new easements and an important meeting with large landowners of parcel in active farming on prospective new measures for farm protection.

Unfortunately, there has been little progress on the hiring of an **Open Space Coordinator** to apply for grants and seek out important properties. We commend the town on its progress and, again, **urge the Town to take action quickly on hiring permanent, professional staff to make the implementation of this Plan both proactive and persistently applied to town development and acquisitions.**

## Town Initiatives.....

### Tax breaks for farm buildings proposed

The town's approximately 30 working farms would be eligible for tax breaks under a proposal that would add farm buildings to an existing conservation easement program. Officials wanted to offer incentives to keep the town's farms active, so they have asked the farming community to help them shape the legislation. Under the new proposal, the farming structure receiving tax benefits must be used principally for farming purposes. Farm stands or farm stores would not be eligible.

Town Assessor, Walter Smead, said he's aware of only two other communities in the state that offer easements on farm buildings. Some of their legislation was used as a model for Clifton Park. The tax breaks would apply to the landowner's property taxes and school taxes.

### Some of Town Surplus To Go For Open Space Account

The town finished 2003 with \$3 million surplus. Last year the town paid cash for \$1.1 million in projects, including \$511,000 for anew CAPTAIN and Family Services Inc. building, \$238,000 for a multi-use path on Van Patten Drive, \$880,000 for renovations of the historic Grooms Tavern and \$50,000 in open space purchases.

Town Supervisor Barrett said he would ask the Town Board to transfer \$500,000 of the \$3 million surplus funds to the town's open space preservation account.

### Property Tax Breaks Ensure Undeveloped Land

This February, the Town Board welcomed the promises of three property owners to keep their properties out of development in return for reduced property taxes. Following a public hearing, the town board voted to grant conservation easements to:

- Robert Sammier of Michigan—285 acres of vacant land near the intersection of route 146A and McElroy Road.
- Ron & Cathy Ochrym—35 acres at 968 Hatlee Rd, Ballston Lake
- Margaret Kinoshian doing business as the Garnet Co., for the Jonesville Country Store at 989 Main Street.

In return for reduced property taxes, the owners agree to not develop or substantially alter their properties for fixed periods of time. These additions bring to about 2,300 the town acreage in the town committed to the program that applies to both open spaces and historic sites.

### Town Wants to Link Two Trails

The town plans to buy a narrow strip of land along Miller Rd that will allow a path running through the Peacock Glen subdivision to connect to another that dead ends at Blossom Ct in the Cortland Manor subdivision. The new multi-use path will cross Miller Rd and link two trails that are separated by only 200 feet.

Other recent additions to the town's expanding trails system include a multi-use path along Moe Road, one along Van Patten Drive off Ushers Road, and another along Kinns Road from Temple Hills to Country Knolls South.

**FRIENDS OF CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE** would like your **financial help** in sustaining our research and outreach efforts. If you would like to help in this way, please detach, complete and mail the form below with your check made out to: **FCPOS, P.O. Box 821, Clifton Park, New York 12065**

*Thank you very much for your support!*

Yes, I want to help Friends of Clifton Park Open Space in their work to preserve the "Park" in Clifton Park

I would like to contribute: \$10  \$20  \$30  \$40  \$50  \$75  \$100

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to: Friends of Clifton Park Open Space—or—FCPOS**

Contributions are not currently deductible as a charitable contribution

# Building Moratorium and GEIS in Western Clifton Park

By Pam Allen, Schenectady Gazette, February, 2003

The town's undeveloped western portion could accommodate about 5,000 new homes and 2.8 million square feet of office and retail space under current zoning regulations, according to a study released that examined the full growth potential of the mainly rural area.

The analysis, which was presented by town engineers Clough, Harbour & Associates, also predicted traffic on local roads would rise 55% over the next 20 years as a result of the increased development, increasing from the current 14,420 trips during peak hours to 23,680 trips.

Building additional roads would be necessary to ease congestion on the state roadways, and several major arterials would require widening. Most of the town's two-lane roads would be inadequate to support the additional travel, engineers said.

Eventually, the intersection at Route 146 and Vischer Ferry Road would carry the same amount of traffic as the busy commercial intersection of route 146 and Clifton Country Road.

Also, 4,000 more students would be added to the Shenendehowa Central School District and homeowners would pay \$750 more a year in school taxes to support the growing student population.

The new residents would use about 1.4 million more gallons of water a day, creating the need for extensive water and sewer system improvements.

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*“4,000 more students would be added to the Shenendehowa School District and homeowners would pay \$750 more a year in school taxes to support the growing student population”*

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In short, under current zoning laws, the current pattern of residential growth in the eastern part of town will make its way west, according to the study.

The quasi-good news: Developed at full potential, the sparsely populated area west of Vischer Ferry Road would add \$1 billion to the tax base, increasing by almost 50% the town's current assessed value of \$2.06 billion. It's unlikely the increase in the town's tax base would offset increased school taxes, however.

The analysis took the 17,500 acres in the study area, removed undevelopable acres with wetlands and other environmental and zoning constraints, and concluded that about 6,200 acres were actually developable, said Joseph Grasso, Senior Landscape Architect with Clough Harbour. “The first step was to define developable land. We couldn't assume all the land was developable,” he said. Also, there is no way of telling when or where or how much of the privately owned property would be developed, he said.

The Town Board ordered the build-out study in October, 2003, shortly after imposing a development moratorium that included the 17,500 acres in the study area. Officials said they ordered the moratorium because it is impossible to study an area that is always changing.

Town Supervisor Philip Barrett said the study would shed light on issues involving the schools, water and sewer, roads, traffic and other factors that would be affected by long-term growth. “[Wednesday] is just a snapshot of what could actually happen over the next 10, 20, or 50 years,” he said.

Now, the Town Board must decide whether the impacts are acceptable or not. If they are, Clough Harbour will begin a new in-depth environmental review of the area. If the board finds certain impacts unacceptable, the firm will prepare a revised analysis based on their concerns. Those concerns might center around maintaining rural character, mitigating traffic or minimizing land use.

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Some of the issues could be solved through implementation of new policies, said consultant John Behan of Behan & Associates, the firm hired by Clough Harbour to study fiscal impacts of future growth. For example, Behan said, the town could create a plan for permanent easements or offer incentives for builders to build according to a certain design.

As many as the 2,600 acres in the study area are in the town's conservation easement program. Those acres were considered as developable because the easements expire after a period of time, Grasso said. ❖

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS.....

### FCPOS GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

Place: Shenendehowa United Methodist Church  
Date: Thursday, September 16, 2004  
Date: Thursday, October 21, 2004  
Time: 7:30 PM

### CLIFTON PARK JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> CELEBRATIONS—FCPOS BOOTH

Place: Clifton Commons, Vischer Ferry Road  
Date: Sunday, July 4, 2004  
Time: 12:00 PM

### CLIFTON PARK PLANNING BOARD MEETINGS

Place: Clifton Park Town Hall, 1 Town Hall  
Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday Nights  
Time: 7:00 PM

Visit us on our web site---now via the Town's home  
page [www.cliftonpark.org](http://www.cliftonpark.org)—get linked to  
FCPOS at [www.cpopenspace.org](http://www.cpopenspace.org)!!!  
Let us know if you would prefer to get our  
Newsletter via email

## FCPOS Letters and Initiatives

February, 2004

**Don't Shortcut IDA Review Process—Agency  
Must Be Accountable to the Public**

April, 2004

**FCPOS Suggested Strategies for Land  
Preservation in the GEIS for Western Clifton  
Park**

June, 2004

**Ushers Road Exxon-Mobil Station Needs  
Public Hearing**

See these letters to the Town Board, Planning Board and  
local newspapers in our next newsletter or at our booth  
July 4<sup>th</sup> at the Clifton Commons. ❖

Friends of Clifton Park Open space  
P.O. Box 821  
Clifton Park, New York 12065  
[www.cpopenspace.org](http://www.cpopenspace.org)

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